

R. Dalitz and G. Stone, "**Mato Kosyk in America**,"  
Letopis 24 (February 1977): 42-79.

## Mato Kosyk in America

### 1. Introduction

In an article published in 1946 Tadeusz Grabowski managed to assemble a large proportion of the known facts concerning the life of the Lower Sorbian poet, Mato Kosyk.<sup>1</sup> So far as we know, there has never been a comprehensive study of the poet's life and works, and Grabowski's article is the fullest account of the main events in Kosyk's life yet published. The lack of a critical monograph makes it difficult to assess the exact position of Kosyk in Sorbian literature, but it seems unlikely that there would be much opposition to a view of him as the greatest Lower Sorbian poet,<sup>2</sup> and it is probably reasonable to regard him as one of the leading figures in Sorbian literature as a whole, occupying a place not far behind Handrij Zejler and Jakub Bart-Čišinski.

The main milestones of Kosyk's life are known to literary historians, but many of the details have been obscured for one reason or another. Even the exact date and place of his death remained unknown until recently. Frído Mětšk's entry for Kosyk in the Sorbian Biographical Dictionary states simply that he died in 1940 in the U.S.A.<sup>3</sup>

Grabowski was well aware of the lack of information on many aspects of Kosyk's biography, particularly from the years (the greater part of the poet's life) spent in the U.S.A. On this subject Grabowski wrote:

Bliższych szczegółów z pobytu Kósyka w Ameryce Półn., gdzie spędził dwie trzecie swego życia, niestety nie znamy. Epoka ta otoczona jest jakąś dziwną tajemnicą. Spoza jej zasłony wyłonił się zaledwie drobny fragment w postaci ogłoszonej w r. 1928 w czasopiśmie „Lužica” części autobiografii Kósyka obejmującej zaledwie lata jego pierwszej młodości z kilku wzmiankami o pobycie w Stanach Zjednoczonych. Możliwe, że ze względów politycznych nie podobna było dotyczeas ogłaszać tej ciekawej spowiedzi życia sędziwego pisarza. Dziś jednak, kiedy stosunki polityczne zmieniły się całkowicie, nic nie powinno stanąć na przeszkodzie opublikowaniu całości autobiografii najstarszego pioniera odrodzenia Dolnych Lužyc. Ostatnio nawet daty śmierci Kósyka nie udało się ustalić.<sup>4</sup>

The outbreak of the Second World War had prevented communication between Kosyk and his homeland during the last years of his life, and Gra-

<sup>1</sup> Tadeusz St. Grabowski, *Sprawy luzyckie. Mato Kósyk. Najprzedniejszy poeta Dolnych Lužyc*, Przegląd zachodni, II, 1946, pp. 1033–45

<sup>2</sup> Jerzy Šliziński, *Mato Kosyk o Polsce i w Polsce*, Létopis Instituta za serbski ludospyt, Rjad A, č. 20/2, 1973, pp. 223–28 (223), hesitates to confirm this view.

<sup>3</sup> Serbski biografski słownik, Bautzen, 1970, pp. 132–33

<sup>4</sup> Grabowski, op. cit., p. 1037

bowski adds that in 1946 it was still thought by the Sorbs that Kosyk was alive and had reached his ninety-third birthday. Subsequent news from Prague that he had "died several years ago" did not include further details.<sup>5</sup>

Our objective in this article is to make a contribution to Kosyk's biography, in particular to the American part of it — the period which Grabowski said was "covered by some strange mystery". The fact that Kosyk's years in America merited research was drawn to the attention of one of the present authors (G. Stone) by Frido Mětšk in the course of conversation in 1965. Independently, the other author (R. Dalitz) had gathered together a number of documents from America, giving basic data concerning Mato Kosyk and his family, and the appointments held by him there. When the two authors came together, working in adjacent colleges in Oxford, there was discussion between them on the outstanding questions concerning the life of Mato Kosyk and it proved possible later for the first author (R. Dalitz) in the course of short stays in the U.S.A. in 1973 and 1974 to visit some of the places where Kosyk had lived, to interview people who had known him, and to discover further new sources on the poet's life.<sup>6</sup>

Before proceeding to this new information, however, it may be useful to summarize what is already known from various sources of Kosyk's life.<sup>7</sup>

Mato Kosyk was born in Wjerbno (Werben) (Kr. Cottbus) on 18 June 1853. He was the first child of a Kossät family in Wjerbno. His parents' names (as given on his baptismal record) were Georg Kossick (genannt Richo) and Maria Schillo (Sapjatzer). With the help of the Wjerbno pastor Friedrich Pětko, he was enabled to study at the Friedrich Wilhelm gymnasium in Cottbus, but without completing his studies there left to find employment as an official on the Leipzig—Dresden railway. In 1876/77 he returned to Lower Lusatia and from 1881 became one of the editors (together with Hajno Jordan and Kito Šwjela) of the Bramborske Nowiny (subsequently named, after 1885, Bramborski Casnik). In 1883, taking leave of his people and his home village Wjerbno, he emigrated to North America on 31 October.<sup>8</sup> In 1885, after some theological studies in his new homeland, he became a pastor of the Wartburg Synod, at Wellsburg (Iowa). Kosyk made one return visit to Lusatia in 1886 following the death of his brother Kito.<sup>9</sup> After his return to the U.S.A. in

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 1037n.

<sup>6</sup> A brief, preliminary note on this undertaking was published by Frido Mětšk in *Zajimawa wuprawa po Kosykowych pućach w USA*, Rozhlad, 3, 1974, pp. 115–116. Some further items have been included in an article published by Siegfried Ramot, "... kśela k chłodnym Błotam zas!" in Serbska pratyja 1975, pp. 46–7.

<sup>7</sup> Apart from the entry in the Sorbian Biographical Dictionary (see note 3 above), which includes a bibliography, the following article is useful: Gerat Hančka, *Kosyk — pozabyty delnjoserbski basnik?*, Rozhlad, 12, 1970, pp. 476–82.

<sup>8</sup> From the entry in the Auswandererregister of the Wjerbno church, written there presumably by pastor Bjarnat Krušwica.

<sup>9</sup> See *Z awtobiografije Mateja Kosyka. Drugi staw.* Łužica, 1928, p. 40. This essay

1887, he continued his career in the German-speaking synods of the Lutheran church there, finally ending up as a pastor in El Reno (Oklahoma). Little was known of his domestic circumstances apart from the fact that he married, that his wife came from Poland, and that the marriage was not particularly happy.<sup>10</sup> Later, he retired to a farm at Albion (Oklahoma) and died in 1940 (exact date and place unknown).<sup>11</sup>

Kosyk's first major poetic work was his narrative poem *Serbska swajzba w Błotach* (printed in 1880), which portrayed in hexameters contemporary rural life in Lower Lusatia. This was followed by his national epic *Pśerada markgroby Gera*, which was first published in the *Časopis Maćicy Serbskeje* in 1882. Most of his short poems were scattered throughout the literary journals of the day, but three collections of these poems were published in book form during his lifetime (*Zběrka dolnoserbskich pěsnjow*, Wojerecy (Hoyerswerda), 1893; *Pěsni, I*, Bautzen, 1929, and *Pěsni, II*, Bautzen, 1930).<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Documents from the Life of Mato Kosyk and his Family

Our picture of Kosyk's life is made more complete by the following documents:<sup>13</sup>

(I) Marriage Licence and Certificate. This shows that a licence was granted on 20 November 1890 by the County Judge of Lancaster County in the State of Nebraska to solemnize a marriage between:

Name of parties	Age	Color	Place of Birth	Residence	Father's Name	Mother's Maiden Name
Mathew Kossick (Groom)	37	White	Germany	Princeton Nebr.	George Kossick	Mary Schillo
Anna Wehr (Bride)	36	White	Germany	Princeton Nebr.	Ludwig Wehr	Emily Dahlstrom

and that Mr. Mathaus (sic) Koessick (sic) and Miss Anna Wehr were duly joined in marriage on 21 November 1890 at Princeton, Lancaster County, by

is reprinted in Mato Kosyk : *Wuběrk z jogo spisow*, ed. J. Frencl, Berlin, 1956. Also Hančka, op. cit., pp. 479–80

<sup>10</sup> The evidence for this is an extract from a letter written by Kosyk in 1928, published by Frido Mětšk in *Chrestomatija dolnoserbskego pismowstwa*, II, Berlin, 1957, p. 144. (See also Sec. 5 below)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Serbski biografiski słownik*, p. 132. Hančka, op. cit. p. 476, however, gives 23 December 1940 as the date of Kosyk's death, but does not give his source.

<sup>12</sup> The entry in *Serbski biografiski słownik* implies that there were four separate books of poetry published. The fourth book was a reprint of *Pśerada Markgroby Gera* at Bautzen in 1924, as volume V in the series *Dom a svět*.

<sup>13</sup> Photocopies are in the possession of the present authors. A copy of each item will be deposited with the Sorbian Cultural Archives at Bautzen upon completion of the present work.

Pastor Jacob Morach. The witnesses were Heinz Tiedemann and Emma Tiedemann.

(II) Death Certificate. This shows that Matthew Kossick, a farmer, born at Werben, Germany, on 18 June 1853, died at his usual residence just outside the town of Albion ("1 mile North") in the County of Pushmataha, State of Oklahoma at 1.45 p.m. on 22 November 1940, and was buried in the Cemetery the following day. The certificate states that he had been living in that community for eight years (in fact, he had lived there for 28 years). The death was reported by Wilma Kossick, his wife, aged 58.

(III) Baptismal Record. This is taken from the *Kirchenbuch der Unabhängigen Ver. für Luth. St. Paulus Kirche in Centerville Precinct, Nebr.*<sup>14</sup> This was the parish of which Mato Kosyk was the pastor at this time. It was generally referred to as the "Stockfeld Parish" after the name of the pastor who established it, but the name "Princeton Parish" is used in the Synod records.<sup>15</sup> This record reads as follows:

1891 Nr. 28. Den Eheleuten Matthaeus Kossick (ev. luth. P.) u. Anna Josephine geb. Wehr ist am 7. Sept. 1891 ein Sohn geboren, welcher am 1. Nov. 1891 getauft u. Georg Ludwig genannt worden. Pathen: Georg Kossick u. Emilie Wehr aus Deutschland (vertreten d. John Tiedemann u. Gemahlin).

(IV) Death Certificate. This shows that George Louis Kossick, a farmer, single, and born in Nebraska on 7 September 1891, the son of M. Kossick and Anna Kossick (nee Wehr), died of apoplexy at 3.30 p.m. on 23 August 1915 at the village of Albion, township of Tuskahoma, County of Pushmataha, State of Oklahoma.<sup>16</sup>

(V) An Autobiographical Record. This was prepared by Kosyk in about 1925–28 in response to a request from the Statistician and Historian of the Nebraska Synod, for transmittal to the central body, the United Lutheran Church in America. He describes himself as Matthaeus Kossick, born in Werben (Spreewald), Germany, on 18 June 1853, the son of George Kossick, a

---

<sup>14</sup> This is the full title written inside the front cover of this register book. The book is now held at the Grace Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Nebraska. It contains no record of Kosyk's marriage, although it records one other marriage for the year 1890. This parish was disbanded in 1932.

<sup>15</sup> The account given of this parish under the heading "St. Paul's Princeton" on p. 188 of the book *Story of the Midwest Synod U.L.C.A., 1890–1950* is in complete disagreement with the record given in this *Kirchenbuch*. On p. 168 of *Story of the Midwest Synod* the list of parishes served by Kosyk are given correctly and in the proper time sequence; the Princeton parish is included in this list.

<sup>16</sup> Pushmataha was a chief of the Choctaw tribe, one of the "Five Civilized Tribes" which had been moved in 1830 from the south-east States of America to the lands which became known later as the Indian Territory. The Choctaw tribe had been resettled in this district and Pushmataha's name was given to the county when this was established. Tuskahoma is Choctaw for 'red warrior', as Oklahoma is Choctaw for 'red people'.

farmer, and Mary Kossick (nee Schillo). In this document Kosyk further states that he studied in Germany and in the Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, before being ordained by the Wartburg Synod at Mount Pulaski, Illinois, on 14 June 1885. Subsequently, according to his statement, he held pastorates in the following parishes:

Wellsburg, Iowa, from 1 March 1885 to 29 August 1886.<sup>17</sup>

Ridgeley, Nebraska, from 1 June 1887 to 1 June 1889.

Princeton, Nebraska, from 1 June 1889 to 30 September 1895,

Stamford, Nebraska, from 4 July 1896.<sup>18</sup>

Ohiowa, Nebraska, to the end of 1907,

El Reno, Oklahoma, until Sunday Jubilate 1913.<sup>19</sup>

Kosyk states that in November 1890 at Princeton, Nebraska, he married Anna Wehr, who was born at Duszno, Province Posen, Germany, the daughter of Ludwig Wehr and Emilie Wehr (nee von Dahlström<sup>20</sup>), and that they had one son (deceased). Finally, he adds: "N. B. Because of deafness I retired from ministry living now on my place close to Albion, Oklahoma."

(VI) County Land Records. U.S. law requires that the transfer of land ownership be registered at the Court Office of the county concerned, by the deposit of an appropriate legal document, signed by the grantor (the earlier owner) and the grantees (the later owner).

For Pushmataha County, the county seat is Antlers. The land documents held there are bound into several hundred large register books, more or less in the proper time sequence,<sup>21</sup> starting from the year 1908 when this territory was first opened for white settlement. These books are accessible to the public and the documents are indexed alphabetically, but only according to the name of the grantor. Consequently, the index registers readily allow us to make a complete list of all the pieces of land in Pushmataha County owned by members of the Kossick family at one time or another, and to learn how they disposed of each piece. On the other hand, to determine how and when they acquired each piece of land is a rather difficult problem, in general. A page-by-page scan of the first three books allowed us to trace their purchase of the two large pieces of land — of 400 acres in 1908 and 510 acres in 1909 — which became known later<sup>22</sup> as the Seminary Farm and the Synodical Farm, respectively. Their acquisition of several other large tracts of land could not be traced in this way and it is most probable that their ownership of these

<sup>17</sup> The gap between August 1886 and June 1887 is accounted for by his return visit to Lusatia (see p. 43 above).

<sup>18</sup> Kosyk gave incomplete entries for his pastorates at Stamford and Ohiowa.

<sup>19</sup> This date is 13 April 1913.

<sup>20</sup> There is good evidence that the use of the prefix "von" here was an error on Kosyk's part (see footnote 52 below).

<sup>21</sup> It appears that, in these early years, registration was often delayed for some years, due to one circumstance or another.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Sec. 5.

tracts was the result of loan defaults, some years after they had settled at Albion. The earliest records specify the amount of money changing hands in the transaction, but the later records use the general formula<sup>23</sup> "for \$ 1 and other valuable considerations".

For Canadian County, the county seat is El Reno. Here also there are a large number of register books. There is no alphabetical index, but there are summary registers which give for each transfer the names of the grantor and grantee, the date on the legal document, the book and page number where it can be found, and the surveyor's reference for the piece of land. Two purchases in 1908 and two purchases in 1911 were found by scanning these summaries; the sale of three of these pieces of land were found to take place in 1910, 1914 and 1923.

For the relevant Nebraska counties (Lancaster, Harlan and Fillmore), we have made search only at Lincoln, the seat of Lancaster County. The records there are preserved on microfilm and there is no index. Further, since Lincoln is the capital city of Nebraska and had been in existence for many decades before Kosyk came to Lancaster County, the number of land transfers recorded is exceedingly large and no record concerning the Kossick family could be found. It is known from letters written by Kosyk and his wife that they possessed farm land in Harlan County while they lived at Stamford.<sup>24</sup> Probably they also owned land in Lancaster and Fillmore Counties, while they were living at Princeton and Ohiowa, respectively, but we have no documentary evidence at all concerning the nature and extent of their land ownership in Nebraska.

### 3. Printed Sources Relevant to Kosyk's Life in America

There are a number of useful printed sources located in the following publications, mostly American, viz:

(I) Article by "Kossick, stud. theol." entitled "Ein lebendiger Denkstein im Herzen Deutschlands", in *Der Lutherische Kirchenfreund* for 10 October 1884, on the reverse of the title page.<sup>25</sup> This paper was published in Chicago for "Die Evangelisch-Lutherische General-Synode in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika", the editor being Prof. E. F. Giese, who was also the senior

<sup>23</sup> Even here, the price of the land can be bracketed because the amount of the stamp duty payable was based on the actual money changing hands.

<sup>24</sup> This is mentioned in passing in two letters dated 3 September 1896 and addressed to Kosyk's mother, the first by Kosyk and the second by Anna Kossick. The originals are held at the Sorbian Cultural Archives at Bautzen. We are most grateful to Dr. Frido Mětšk for having made available to us copies of this and several other letters referred to in this article.

<sup>25</sup> This issue may also be identified as "Ganze Nummer 692" or "Jahrgang 16, Nr. 36", both characterizations being printed on the title page. A copy of the article has been deposited with the Sorbian Cultural Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic at Bautzen.

professor of the Chicago Theological Seminary where Kosyk was then a student. In his article, Kosyk acquaints his readers with something of the life and history of the "Wends", emphasizing their reputation for faithfulness and piety, and describing customs connected with church attendance. He refers to the lack of Sorbian pastors and suggests that American philanthropists might help improve the situation with monetary contributions. The article closes with some lines of verse in Lower Sorbian, as follows:<sup>26</sup>

Daloko pod zajtra znaju ja kraj tak krasny kaz Eden,  
 Zbozne pobspiwany wot nebjaskich spiwarjow wsednje,  
 Na kotrychz kjarlize wotgronje zuki wjeleserake,  
 Tam se po swetem nalogu cesne a hujspurne zowki  
 Waze na slobanych zwalkach maeandriskich reckow.  
 Dere, ja znaju ten kraj wsak maly, glich wutroby zwerne  
 Dybju stawnje we njom we negluge ako we gluce,  
 Dere, wsak znaju ten kraj, ja znaju te — domacne pola.

This was accompanied by a German translation in verse.

(II) Editorial Note concerning Kosyk's death, in the *Lutherischer Herold* for 23 January 1941, on p. 11, as follows:<sup>27</sup>

Nachrichten aus dem Mittelwesten. Nachträglich erfuhren wir, daß ein Wohltäter unsrer Synode aus dem Leben geschieden ist. In Albion, im südlichen Oklahoma, in den Ozarks hat er gewohnt, weit entfernt vom Territorium der Synode des Mittelwestens. So ist es geschehen, daß wir erst längere Zeit nach dem Tode dieses Wohltäters von seinem Abscheiden erfuhren. Wie gerne hätten wir ihm die letzten Ehren erwiesen. Pastor M. Kossick war der letzte der Gründer unsrer Synode. Seit vielen Jahren, und den meisten der Glieder unserer Synode unbekannt, lebte er in der Stille der Ozarkberge. Aber er hatte ein warmes Herz für seine Synode, die er hat gründen helfen. Einen Teil seines Eigentums hatte er schon lange der Synode übergeben. Noch im letzten Jahr hat er der Kirche über \$ 1240 für wohltätige Zwecke übergeben. Auch das Werk des Lutherischen Herolds lag ihm am Herzen. Es tut uns leid, daß dieser letzte der Väter unsrer Synode von uns gegangen ist. Möge Gott es ihm lohnen, was er an Wohltätigkeit getan hat.

(III) Obituary dated 2 January 1941, in *The Lutheran*, XXII, 16, issue of 15 January 1941, p. 30.<sup>28</sup> From this we learn that Kosyk became a citizen of

<sup>26</sup> The poem was printed without diacritics, since these could not be provided by the printer.

<sup>27</sup> The *Lutherischer Herold* was published in Philadelphia for the United Lutheran Church of America (U.L.C.A.) It succeeded *Lutherischer Zions-Bote* (see footnote 43 below), after the latter and *Deutscher Lutheraner* (published by the Eastern Synods of the U.L.C.A.) were combined in 1922.

<sup>28</sup> *The Lutheran* was the official organ for the English-speaking Lutherans of the Evangelical-Lutheran General Synod of the United States of North America, just as *Lutherischer Herold* was for the German-speaking members of this Synod.

the U.S.A. on 26 September 1894. The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. C. Goede, "an old friend of Mr. Kossick", assisted by his son, the Rev. William Goede. This obituary also refers to Kosyk's benefactions: "His gifts ran into the thousands of dollars not only for the work in the Midwest Synod but also for work outside the Synod and in foreign lands". A manuscript draft of this obituary (by Pastor E. C. Hansen)<sup>29</sup> states: "In November 1890 he was married to Anna (nee) Wehr, to which union one son was born, who preceded him in death, 1915. In 1929 his faithful wife was called away in death". The published version does not mention her death, nor gives the son's year of death.

(IV) Obituary in *Lutherischer Herold*, XIX, issue of 9 January 1941, pp. 9–10.<sup>30</sup> The contents are closely similar to those of the obituary in *The Lutheran*, and the author is the same. The following sentences are interesting, however, and are not given in the English version of the obituary: "Pastor Kossick war einer der stillen, ruhigen Seelen im Lande, nicht nur reich gesegnet von der Gnade Gottes, sondern auch reich gesegnet mit irdischen Gütern. Er hat in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens fast sein ganzes irdisches Vermögen der Kirche des Herrn gegeben und viele Arme mit seinen Gaben reich gemacht."

(V) *Story of the Midwest Synod U.L.C.A., 1890–1950*, n. d. or p.<sup>31</sup> This contains a number of references to Kosyk. There is mention of his role in setting up the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Nebraska in 1890, with the statements (p. 30): "From Princeton he drove his horse and buggy to attend the organisation of the German Nebraska Synod on July 24. He stayed only one day", and (p. 2): "A committee, consisting of the pastors Wm. Thoelle,

<sup>29</sup> The draft obituaries are located in the Archives of the Nebraska Synod, Lutheran Church of America, in Omaha, Nebraska. Both draft obituaries and the German published version give Stanford as one of the parishes served by Kosyk, but the English published version gives the correct name, Stamford. We are much indebted to Rev. F. H. Farstrup for his help in locating and providing us with copies of these and other documents in his care.

<sup>30</sup> See footnote 27 above.

<sup>31</sup> After World War I, more and more English came to be used in the parishes of the German Nebraska Synod; from 1935, the Minutes of the Synodical Meetings were published in English, with mimeographed German Minutes also available. Also, the Synod came to have many parishes which lay outside the State of Nebraska. Finally, in 1937, it was agreed that the name of the Synod should be changed to "The Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the Midwest", generally being referred to as the "Midwest Synod". In 1954, the Synod merged with the Synods of Kansas and Nebraska to form "The Synod of the Central States". In 1962, this latter Synod became a district of the Lutheran Church of America (L.C.A.), as a result of a larger merger involving the United Lutheran Church of America (U.L.C.A.), of which the Midwest Synod had been a district since its formation in 1918 by a merger involving the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (of which the German Nebraska Synod had been a district since the formation of the latter in 1890).

Matthias Kossick and a Mr. Westphal, a lay delegate . . . was appointed to present recommendations concerning a synodical constitution". This book also contains a photograph of the poet (p. 30)<sup>32</sup> and the following further information (pp. 30–31):

Pastor Kossick was one of the few left of a vanishing race, the "Wends". For him German was an acquired language. In his youth he wrote four volumes of poetry in the Wendish language. By marriage and by inheritance he acquired comparative wealth, most of which he lost to dishonest natives in Albion, Oklahoma. They borrowed money from him, giving their landholdings as security at twice their true valuation. Then they left him to hold the land instead of paying him back. Thus he acquired several thousand acres of nearly worthless land. As heavy taxes began to eat into his money reserves he gave a large portion to the Catholic<sup>33</sup> church on an Annuity basis. He also gave 200 acres to the Martin Luther Seminary Institution at Lincoln and his last holdings he gave to Synod in 1930.

The transfer of Kosyk's land is dealt with in greater detail later (pp. 113–115). We shall quote the main passages verbatim:

Pastor M. Kossick, one of the founders of Synod, when he retired from active ministry in Enid,<sup>34</sup> Oklahoma, moved to Albion, Oklahoma, where he had acquired some farm and timberlands. Albion is located in Pushmataha County in the southeastern corner of Oklahoma, where the Ozarks push into the state. The mountains in that part of the country are called the Kiamichi mountains. The country was and still is primitive and relatively undeveloped and the hinterlands in the mountains was and still is the home of Indians, half-breeds and the hide-out of outlaws. The best that could be said for the country was that the climate was very healthy and the views very scenic. And these were the two chief considerations that caused Pastor Kossick, his wife and son to move there.

When the people of Albion discovered that Pastor Kossick and his wife were people of means and willing to loan money to those in need, many people borrowed large sums of money, giving as collateral mortgages on

<sup>32</sup> This is the well-known portrait reproduced in several publications, including Mato Kosyk : *Wubjerk z jogo lëriki*, Bautzen 1953. The same portrait is again reproduced, on a smaller scale, on p. 113 of the Story of the Midwest Synod U.L.C.A., 1890–1950.

<sup>33</sup> This does not mean the Roman Catholic Church. The land (510 acres on the south side of the Kiamichi river (see Sec. 5 below)) was in fact given to the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Nebraska, as the county land records at Antlers (the county seat for Pushmataha County) demonstrate. Cf. Sec. 5 below.

<sup>34</sup> There is a discrepancy here. In his Autobiographical Record (Sec. 2(V) above) Kosyk makes no reference to Enid. The Annual Minutes of the Conference of the German Nebraska Synod (see item. (VI) of this section) show that El Reno and Union City were the only two Oklahoma parishes which Kosyk served as pastor.

their lands. These were often represented, sometimes even with the connivance of county officials, as being of double and triple the value they actually were. Then when the loans came due, they simply let Pastor Kossick take possession of the land instead. Thus he acquired several thousand acres of land, until he became land poor. On top of that the county began to levy heavier and heavier taxes against him. Therefore, in July, 1930, he donated 510 acres of land to the Synod, with the proviso that he or his heirs should retain 1/16 of the mineral (oil) rights and that Synod should pay him an annuity of \$100 a year . . . Shortly before that Pastor Kossick had sold to the Trustees of Martin Luther Seminary a tract of 380 acres of land, that is the land on which his home stood, for a nominal sum,<sup>35</sup> with the understanding that the Seminary pay all taxes and make all repairs and pay him an annuity of \$200 a year for the rest of his life . . .

When Pastor Kossick gave the land he gave it in good faith and in the belief that he was giving a worthwhile gift. Altho he may have had some exaggerated ideas of the value of his land at that time, and we must remember that he was over 80 years old<sup>36</sup> then, he also had some justification for thinking that it was a valuable donation . . . By 1935 the Board of Trustees of Martin Luther Seminary reported that their property in Oklahoma had been a financial burden and a never ending worry. That the \$200 annuity to Pastor Kossick had not been paid for the last few years and that the land had not produced enough to pay for the taxes. A like judgment only to a lesser degree, held true for the synodical holdings.

Synod appointed a committee consisting of Pastor M. Schroeder and Messrs. Ed. Schneider from Lipscombe, Texas, and John Havekost from Hooper, Nebraska, to make investigation in person. In the course of that year they made a trip to the land. They reached an agreement with Pastor Kossick, by which, upon the payment of \$125, all annuity payments from synod and seminary would be cancelled, for the past and the future.

(VI) The Minutes of the Annual Conventions of the German Wartburg Synod, the Nebraska Synod, the German Nebraska Synod and the Midwest Synod. It was the custom of each Synod of the Lutheran evangelical churches in America to hold an annual convention, at which a detailed accounting of the work of the Synod during the year just past was presented to its pastors and discussed. Reports were given by many committees, concerning for example the admission of pastors from Seminaries or from other Synods, the resignations of pastors, the calls accepted by pastors to parishes where the pastorship had become vacant, and the condition of each parish at the time

<sup>35</sup> The sum was \$1.

<sup>36</sup> He was actually 77 then.

of the convention, as well as many other matters. These reports, together with the presidential address and other such items, were then published as the Minutes of the Annual Convention and sent to each pastor of the Synod, both to inform him (in the event that he had been unable to attend), and to provide a permanent record concerning the state and development of the Synod. The Minutes of interest in the present connection are those of the German Wartburg Synod for the years 1885-87,<sup>37</sup> those of the Nebraska Synod for the years 1887-91,<sup>38</sup> and those of the German Nebraska Synod for the years 1893 onwards.<sup>39</sup> These Minutes provide us with authoritative statements about the dates and places of Kosyk's appointments, and about his other church activities, during his period of service. They also include an attendance record; although Kosyk was one of those at the foundation meeting for the German Nebraska Synod, and therefore well known later throughout the Synod as the last of the foundation members, he did not regularly attend the annual Synod convention, except for the period 1900-1907, during which he missed only the 1904 convention.

The Minutes also give us some interesting glimpses of Kosyk's later years, at Albion, Oklahoma. The committee just mentioned in the last section, appointed to investigate the land donated by Kosyk to the German Nebraska Synod, made their report<sup>40</sup> at the 47th Convention of the Synod, held at St. John's Church, Westboro, Missouri, on 1-5 July 1936. Although the holdings appeared to be of little agricultural value, the committee was impressed by the climate and scenery. They reported:

Approaching Pushmataha Co., we passed through the western slope of the Ozark mountains, which parts are set apart as a National Park. In close proximity of the land, about ten miles from the actual tracts of Synod the United States Government maintains a T.B. Hospital for Indians, and one mile closer, next to the town of Talihih (recte Talihina) is the State's hospital for T.B. patients. The climate is of the healthiest anywhere to be found. Pastor Kossick in spite of his 83 years outwalked

<sup>37</sup> The German Wartburg Synod Minutes for the relevant years are held in the Abdel Ross Wentz Library of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. An English summary of their contents is given by W. E. Kaitschuk in *History of the Wartburg Synod*, Burlington (Iowa), 1940.

<sup>38</sup> The relevant Nebraska Synod Minutes are held in the Library of the Lutheran School of Theology (L.S.T.), Chicago, and also in the Archives of the Nebraska Synod Lutheran Church of America (N.S.L.C.A.) at Omaha, Nebraska.

<sup>39</sup> Most of the Minutes of the German Nebraska Synod and of the Midwest Synod which succeeded it are held at L.S.T., but with gaps for the years 1894-7, 1922 and 1927-31. A more complete set of these Minutes is held in the N.S.L.C.A. Archives at Omaha, Nebraska. We are much indebted to Rev. J. W. Lundein of L.S.T., Chicago, and Rev. F. H. Farstrup of N.S.L.C.A., Omaha, for their help and guidance concerning these archival records.

<sup>40</sup> This report is given in full on pp. 42-46 of the Minutes of this Convention.

any of us younger men in climbing the stony mountains. He seems to personify eternal youth.<sup>41</sup>

The land where Kosyk's farm and house were situated were particularly poor (according to the committee):

The examination of the 380 acres . . . showed that it consists entirely of rough land, stony, gravel, sand and rocks, with really no tillable land in evidence, a recent flood having swept away the last particle of loam, if such has been there . . . It is not clear to us how any occupant of the so-called farm property can make a living from the soil as we saw it. The only possibility lies with grazing . . .<sup>42</sup>

(VII) *Lutherischer Zions-Bote*.<sup>43</sup> Besides general articles of Church interest, this twice-monthly newspaper included reports on parish activities, although not in a systematic way. In the early years, there were rather few of these reports, but by the early 1900s they had become a substantial part of the paper. It was customary for most parishes to hold a missionary festival after the harvest was in, and many pastors regularly wrote an account of their parish missionary festival for publication in the *Zions-Bote*; others, such as Kosyk, never did so. However, Kosyk's name does appear in many of these reports as one of the guest pastors. We quote one example of some interest,<sup>44</sup> published in 1899:

Am 3. September (1899) feierte die Gemeinde von Pastor Kurt Müller in Sutton, Neb., ihr Missionsfest. Der Morgengottesdienst wurde von Pastor Kossick aus Stamford geleitet . . . Nachmittags besorgte Pastor Fricke (aus Ohiowa) den liturgischen Teil, und die Pastoren Kossick und Schulz aus Bluehill predigten . . .

At this date, Kosyk was pastor of the St. John's parish at Ohiowa, having moved there from Stamford at the end of the preceding April. The parish of Sutton is about 25 miles north-west from Ohiowa and was founded by Volga-German immigrants.<sup>45</sup> As Kosyk was a newcomer to the district, it was natural that he should be invited as a guest preacher at the next missionary festival at Sutton, and it was of much interest for him to meet fellow Lutherans who

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 42

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 44

<sup>43</sup> *Lutherischer Zions-Bote* was published twice monthly in Chicago "für die Deutschen der General-Synode der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche von Nord-Amerika", from 1896 until 1922. A complete set for the years of interest here (1896–1910) is held at the Abdel Ross Wentz Library of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

<sup>44</sup> *Lutherischer Zions-Bote*, vol. 4, 1899, p. 141. This item was submitted for publication by Pastor M. F. Schulz of the St. Paul's parish at Blue Hill (16 miles south of Hastings). The description "aus Stamford" for Kosyk can refer only to his recent arrival in this district from Stamford (about 100 miles west of Sutton). There were two parishes at Ohiowa; Kosyk's parish was north-east from Ohiowa, whereas the parish of Pastor H. W. Fricke was to the south-west of Ohiowa.

also spoke a Slavonic tongue, as is recorded in a letter he wrote later that year.<sup>46</sup>

(VIII) Local Newspapers. During the years 1913–18 at least,<sup>47</sup> a weekly newspaper named the *Albion Advocate* was composed and printed at Albion. Besides national and foreign news, it reported meetings and decisions from the state and county capitals and gave a wide variety of brief items of local news and gossip. To give an example of the latter, from the issue of 4 June 1915:

George Kosick (sic) and Ben Dupree attended the singing at Peare Grove Sunday.

Much can be learned from the *Albion Advocate* concerning the Albion people and the style and tempo of their lives, before and during World War I.

The items of most importance for us are printed in the issue of the *Albion Advocate* dated Friday, 27 August 1915, as follows:

George Kossick Meet (sic) Sudden Death by Drowning.

The people of Albion were sadly shocked Monday when news came of the drowning of George Kossick, who, while crossing Kiamichi river at the ford known as the Thompson ford in company with Ben Dupree, Bill Fikes (sic) and Wilson Odom, seems to have lost his balance while stooping over apparently to fix his saddle. He fell from his horse and sank into the water and as he came up, his companions caught him and carried him to the bank.

A call was immediately sent to Dr. Wright who came and done all he could to resuscitate him. Never regaining consciousness he died Monday evening at the home of George Files (sic) where he had been taken. He left home that morning to look at his crop across the river and was crossing when the accident occurred. It will never be known what produced his immediate death for he was rescued coming up the first time after sinking in to the water. He had just gotten up from a sick bed and it is thought this had a great deal to do with his death. He was young in manhood and indeed a likely fellow. He was born at Prinection (sic), Neb., in 1891 and moved here with his parents three years ago. He is the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Kossick, who came from Germany to make a home in this

<sup>45</sup> The Volga-German settlers at Sutton are mentioned in Nebraska, A Guide to the Cornhusker State, by Works Progress Administration — Federal Writers Project, New York, 1939. Reference to the Volga-German founders of the Zion parish at Sutton will also be found in *Story of the Midwest Synod*, p. 371.

<sup>46</sup> An extract to this effect from a letter written by Kosyk was published by Frido Mětšk in *Chrestomatiya dolnoserbskogo pismowstwa*, II, Berlin, 1957, p. 143. The name of the parish is mis-spelled Satton in this extract.

<sup>47</sup> It is not known precisely when the *Albion Advocate* began and ended publication. The only copies known to have survived are held in the Newspaper Room of the Oklahoma State Historical Museum, in Oklahoma City. These copies run from 3 July 1913 to 16 October 1913 and from 20 November 1914 to 26 July 1918.

country. They bot (sic) land here and settled among a people who have learned to esteem and respect them.

The remains of George Kossick laid (sic) to rest Tuesday evening at their home place with funeral services conducted before a big crowd by Rev. W. E. Justice.

This dramatic tragedy is still remembered vividly in the Albion district. It will be discussed again briefly in Sec. 5, from the recollections of the older people at Albion. On the same page of the *Albion Advocate*, we read also a brief statement by Mato Kosyk and his wife, as follows:

To all the kind people of Albion and to all the friends of our dear George, who departed this life so suddenly, and especially to all good neighbours and to those, who have done the hard work at the digging of the grave on our place according to the special wishes of Mrs. Kossick — we, the afflicted parents, utter hereby our sincere thanks for all condolence and help at the funeral.

M. Kossick,  
Mrs. A. Kossick

The *Albion Advocate* ceased publication before the end of World War I. After that time, the local Albion news was published in the *Talihina American*, a weekly newspaper produced from 1918 in the neighbouring town of Talihina in Leflore County.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, no copies of the *Talihina American* have survived with date before 1947.

(IX) *Deutsches Geschlechterbuch*.<sup>49</sup> The name "Kossick o Ohiova" (sic) appears in Wasmansdorff's index<sup>50</sup> to this series of volumes. The corresponding entry<sup>51</sup> occurs under the name Wehr and reads as follows:

11. Anna I \* 28/6/1849, verm. —/10/1890 mit Georg Kossik \* 18/6/1851, Prediger zu Ohiova (?) in Nord-Amerika.

Thus, according to the complete entry for the Wehr family, Anna Wehr was the eleventh child of Alexander Hermann Ludwig Wehr, a landowner and member of the nobility, described as "Rittergutsbesitzer auf Duszno bei Tremessen, Ritter des Roten Adler-Ordens 4. Kl." Her father was born at Glogowiec (Kr. Mogilno) in 1806, the son of Johann Wehr ("Erbpachtsbesitzer auf Glogowiec"), and died in 1869, presumably at Duszno. The entry also states that her mother was Emilie (born Dahlström<sup>52</sup>) from Friedland (Kr. Schlochau,

<sup>48</sup> The *Talihina American* is still published today, as a daily newspaper.

<sup>49</sup> *Genealogisches Handbuch bürgerlicher Familien* (*Deutsches Geschlechterbuch*), ed. successively by G. A. Seyler, by a committee of the Verein "Herold", and by B. Koerner, Charlottenburg, 1889—1944 (hereafter referred to as DGB).

<sup>50</sup> E. Wasmansdorff, *Genealogisches Handbuch bürgerlicher Familien: Gesamtnamenverzeichnis umfassend Bd. 1—50*, Görlitz, 1928

<sup>51</sup> DGB, vol. 11, 1904, p. 529

<sup>52</sup> The DGB does not indicate the name "von Dahlström" written by Kosyk in his autobiographical record (cf Sec 2(V) above), although it traces the Dahlström family back two generations from Emilie Dahlström. What evidence exists (DGB,

West Prussia), born in 1815, the second wife of Ludwig Wehr, died on 23 November 1891. Thus, Emilie Wehr's death was about one year after Anna left Duszno for her long journey to Princeton, Nebraska, to marry Mato Kosyk.

These family particulars in the Wehr entry were presumably provided by the Wehr family, so that the information pertaining to events in Germany may reasonably be regarded as reliable. Thus, for example, this evidence indicates that Anna Wehr was not 36 (the age given on the marriage licence) but 41 years old at the time of her marriage to Kosyk. However, we must note that the information in this entry, bearing on Mato Kosyk and her marriage to him, is almost all incorrect in detail, being inconsistent with the documentary evidence cited in Sec. 2 above.

In a later volume<sup>53</sup>, for the year 1929, the Wehr entry is updated. Anna Wehr's father is there described as "Rittergutsbesitzer auf Hochberg bei Tremessen", but a footnote indicates that Hochberg is the place previously known as Duszno. The entry for Anna Wehr omits her marriage date and repeats the incorrect information previously given concerning her husband, but now (1929) describing him as "Prediger zu Albion, Oklahoma, Fußmatva 10", which is also not strictly correct.<sup>54</sup> This entry also states that Anna Wehr's mother was born at Preuss.-Friedland and was the daughter of Gottlieb Dahlström, a merchant there. This volume also traces the Wehr family back to 1721, stating that they were originally known by the name "von Weyer", being descendants of a family from Holland with the name "van der Weyher" who had migrated to West Prussia very early,<sup>55</sup> and showing that they had not used the prefix "von" for some centuries past.

In 1933, there is given a further entry,<sup>56</sup> for the family<sup>57</sup> "Wehr aus Heinrichsfelde in Posen", which states that Anna Wehr was born at Duszno bei Tremessen and that she died on 5 February 1929. This date of death agrees with Kosyk's statement in a letter<sup>58</sup> which he wrote to B. Śwjela from Albion, dated 19 February 1929. No death certificate for Anna Kossick<sup>59</sup> can be found by the civil authorities of the State of Oklahoma, despite the law that all deaths must be properly reported to them.

---

vol. 62, 1929, p. 478) suggests that the Dahlström family came from Sweden in the early part of the 18th century.

<sup>53</sup> DGB, vol. 62, 1929, p. 478-9

<sup>54</sup> The number 10 is probably a misinterpretation of "Co." an abbreviation for "County". The last three words should read "Pushmataha Co., Oklahoma", as we know from the American documents described in Sec. 2.

<sup>55</sup> DGB, vol. 62, 1929, p. 471, quotes "Alt. Siebmacher Bd. 1 Taf. 109" for authority. The reference is as follows: J. Siebmacher, *New Wappenbuch*, Nuremberg, 1605.

<sup>56</sup> DGB, vol. 78, 1933, p. 503

<sup>57</sup> Anna's great-grandfather was Michael Wehr (also Währ and Weyherr), who was from 1763 Freischulze at Heinrichsfelde (Czaicze) in Kr. Wirsitz.

<sup>58</sup> See Mato Kosyk: *Wuberk z joga spisow*, pp. 131-3

<sup>59</sup> Here and elsewhere in this article we use the English forms appropriate for the names of all persons and places in America, with the exception of Mato Kosyk.

The above evidence makes it clear that Anna Kossick came from a German family, contrary to assumptions which have been made on occasion, based on an extract from one of Kosyk's letters, written in 1928 and published in 1957. The extract is as follows:<sup>60</sup>

Cytach raz w Casniku, až moja žona bywa Serbowka. To jo molenje. Wona jo z kněskich dobytkow z Polskeje. Po smjerši starjejšych su žesi te wjelike dobytki pseporali a pšeigrali. Moja žeńska njejo Słowjanam dobra. Pšecej lutosćiwje se wusměwkujo, gaž serbski pišu. Nejglucnjejše manželstwo njejo.

In a recent article Jerzy Śliziński describes this passage as "especially interesting for Poles" and suggests: "Perhaps it was under the influence of this unfortunate union that Kosyk's formerly cordial feelings towards Poland and the Poles became cold."<sup>61</sup> But we know now that Anna Kosyk came from a German family owning a manorial estate close to the eastern border of Posen Province. However strained the relation between her and Kosyk, the fact that her family held lands in Poland can scarcely have had any influence on Kosyk's feelings towards the Poles. On the other hand, her own attitude towards the Slavs was rather common among German land-owning families in Poland.

#### 4. The Church Career of Mato Kosyk

When Mato Kosyk arrived in America in 1883 and sought to become a student of theology, he first joined the Practical Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield, Illinois,<sup>62</sup> which was connected with the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. The evidence for this is provided by letters in his own hand, one reproduced in the Appendix here, and three others already published.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See Mato Kosyk : *Wuběrk z joho spisow*, pp. 116–123  
 The Missouri Synod stemmed from the "Altlutheraner" who emigrated from Germany rather early. It has always been the most orthodox and most conservative of the Lutheran bodies in America and its atmosphere and teaching were not to Kosyk's taste. It would appear that, having learned that there were other German-speaking Lutherans in America who belonged to the General Synod, which was the most liberal, the most evangelical and the most open of the Lutheran Synods, and that there was a Seminary of the General Synod not far away, at Chicago in the same State, he transferred to study there, as soon as this was possible, in January 1884.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Chrestomatija dolnoserbskego pismowstwa*, II, p. 144

<sup>61</sup> Śliziński, op. cit., p. 228. In the original, this passage is "Może, że właśnie pod wpływem tego nieudanego związku ochłodły serdeczne początkowo uczucia Kosyka do Polski i do Polaków".

<sup>62</sup> Founded 1873. The name M. Kossick cannot be found in the Seminary's records. Our thanks are due to Mrs. B. W. Steege, Director of the Library there, who carried out the search.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 120



1. Map of the Midwest States where Kosyk first studied and then worked as pastor. For each appointment held by Kosyk, we outline the County, the dot enclosed within it showing the location of his parish in this County. The large dots give the locations of large towns or cities, for the purpose of orientation.

The German Theological Seminary of the General Synod was founded at Chicago in 1881 and its first head was the Rev. Prof. E. F. Giese. In 1884, when Kosyk came there as a student, this Seminary was still rather small, and barely surviving; indeed, during the year 1883-4 the number of students at any one time ranged between 5 and 8 and Giese was both Head of the Seminary and its only instructor. When Kosyk first arrived, the Seminary students all lived in the lower rooms of a German and English day school at 534 (now numbered 1431) North Wells St., North Chicago, and had to walk to the Professor's house at 393 (numbered 2444/6 today) Lincoln Avenue for their

classes. At the end of February 1884, they all moved to a building at Chicago Lawn, which was then a small but growing community within the township of Lake and situated about 8 miles south-west from central Chicago. Chicago Lawn was first laid out in 1876, connected with Chicago by the Chicago and Grant Trunk Railway Company (later the Grand Trunk Western) in 1880, and annexed to Chicago in 1889, although it was then still separated from the city of Chicago by much farmland. This building badly needed repairs for which no money was available.<sup>65</sup> Kosyk probably aroused much interest at the Seminary through his Sorbian background, and this stimulated him to write the introductory account of his people for the German-speaking Lutherans in the American midwest region which Prof. Giese published in *Der Lutherische Kirchenfreund* (see Sec. 3(I) above).

Kosyk's period of study at the Chicago Seminary seems to have been quite brief and intensive, and his early training at the Cottbus Gymnasium now proved its value. Also, his close association with Pastor Krušwica and his church activities at Wjerbno during the five years before his emigration gave him a strong background for these studies. In any event, he had been at the Chicago Seminary no longer than fourteen months when he was called out to his first parish. At that time, there was a desperate need for German-speaking pastors in the parishes of the Wartburg and the Nebraska Synods so that, in the training of pastors, every effort was made and all corners cut to get suitable men out into the field as early as possible.

In the president's report at the tenth Annual Convention of the German Wartburg Synod,<sup>66</sup> held 9–13 June 1885 at the Second Church of Mount Pulaski, Illinois, we read:

Am 10. März wurde Student Matthäus Kossick für die Gemeinde in Wellsburgh (sic), Grundy Co., Ia., bis zur Versammlung der Synode licenziert.

In fact, as recorded above (cf. Sec. 2(V)), he took up his first appointment,

<sup>65</sup> All of this is recounted in some detail in Giese's report to the 9th Annual Convention of the Wartburg Synod in June 1884, printed in the Minutes of this Convention, pp. 14–16. The address of his house is given in the index of pastors included in *Der Lutherische Kalendar* for 1883 and 1884, published at Allentown, Pennsylvania.

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the Tenth Annual Convention of the German Wartburg Synod, p. iv. The German Wartburg Synod was founded in 1876, and grew out of the German Conference of the Central Illinois Synod, which had been established in 1873. The separation of the Lutheran Synods into an English Conference, which consisted of well-established parishes where the younger people had attended English-language schools and used English as their normal language outside their homes, and a German Conference, which consisted of parishes where there was a particularly large fraction of German speakers or where there were still fresh immigrants from Germany in the process of settling, is characteristic of this period. Much later, as the immigration into the relevant region slowed and the German speakers grew old, the German-speaking Synod would lose strength, and finally become absorbed into the growing English-language Synod.

as pastor to the parish of Wellsburg, on 1 March 1885. He was also ordained into the German Wartburg Synod at this Convention.<sup>67</sup>

The Lutherans in the Wellsburg parish were mainly immigrants from East Friesland, and their language must have given rise to some difficulties of communication between Pastor Kosyk and his flock. This may have been, in part at least, the reason why Kosyk resigned this pastorship and left the Wartburg Synod after one year. Another reason for his resignation was his desire to journey back to the Spreewald to visit his parents and family, as his brother Kito, who had taken over the farming of the Kosyk land at Wjerbno, had recently died (of typhus, on 1 June 1886). In any event, Kosyk resigned his pastorship at Wellsburg on 29 August 1886<sup>68</sup> and set off on his long journey across the Atlantic, back to his beloved Spreewald.<sup>69</sup>

After Kosyk's return to America early in 1887, he approached the Nebraska Synod<sup>70</sup> and accepted a call from the St. John's parish of Ridgeley, in the Dodge County of Nebraska and about eight miles south-west from Scribner. He took up this pastorship on 1 June 1887, although his formal application for membership of this Synod was not made until September 10th.<sup>71</sup> His name was added to the rolls of the Synod at its 1887 Annual Convention and he became a member of its German Conference. The Ridgeley parish was quite small, reporting 35 communicant members in 1887. At Ridgeley, Kosyk also took the responsibility for a scattered, rural congregation of German-speaking farmers centred on the township of Pleasant Valley, also in Dodge County.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. These Minutes also record (in Prof. Giese's report on p. VII) the resignation of Prof. Giese, the closure of the Chicago Theological Seminary on 7 May 1885, and the dispersal of its students. The Rev. L. M. Heilmann took care of the Seminary property, until the Rev. Dr. J. Severinghaus reorganised the Seminary, with a new site at the corner of West Augusta St. and Ashland Avenue, quite close to central Chicago. This Seminary became quite successful in later years, its success almost blotting out memory of the earlier Chicago Seminary where Kosyk had been a student. It is quite often said that Kosyk was a "Severinghaus man", (e. g. on p. 30 of the *Story of the Midwest Synod*), but Kosyk had left Chicago at least six months before Severinghaus took charge of the Chicago Theological Seminary.

<sup>68</sup> Kosyk's resignation from the Synod is noted in the Minutes of the 12th Annual Convention of the Wartburg Synod, held at Lena (Illinois) on 14–19 June 1887.

<sup>69</sup> The evidence concerning this visit to Wjerbno has been brought forward and discussed by G. Hančka, op. cit. Note the entry against the name M. Kossick in the address list for pastors in *Der Lutherische Kalendar* (Allentown, Penna.) for 1887: "derzeit in Deutschland".

<sup>70</sup> The Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Nebraska was founded at Omaha, Nebraska in 1871. There were both German-speaking and English-speaking pastors in this Synod.

<sup>71</sup> The Minutes of the Annual Convention of the Nebraska Synod, held 27 September – 4 October 1887. His enrolment is recorded on p. 5, his application for admission is on p. 7, and his acceptance of the call from Ridgeley is on p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> In 1891, two years after Kosyk's departure, this Pleasant Valley congregation was organized as a separate parish, with its own church (named St. Matthew's). See *Story of the Midwest Synod*, p. 368

He resigned his pastorate at Ridgeley on 1 June 1889, taking up on this date a call he had accepted from the Stockfeld parish of the St. Paul's church at Princeton,<sup>73</sup> a small town within a substantial farming community and in the Centerville precinct of Lancaster County, about 15 miles due south from Lincoln, the capital city of Nebraska. This was an "independent" parish, not allied with any particular Synod, and Kosyk was its first pastor from the Nebraska Synod.<sup>74</sup> In the *Nebraska Synod Minutes* for 1893, Kosyk reported that the Princeton parish had 70 communicant members, a rather larger congregation than he had had at Ridgeley.

During the late 1880s, the German Conference of the Nebraska Synod came to feel more and more that they were a disregarded minority in the Synod, and there was much dissatisfaction among its German-speaking elements. Much discussion of their situation and needs took place at the meetings of the German Conference in April 1888 and September 1889. After the 1888 meeting, their demands were put to the Nebraska Synod, which rejected them as unconstitutional at their Annual Convention in September 1888. Finally, Pastor J. Wolff made the consecration ceremonies for the new church of his St. John's congregation at Sterling, Nebraska, on 26 July 1890 an opportunity for discussion and action on the part of the German Conference.<sup>75</sup> He invited all the members of the German Conference to meet at Sterling on 24 July 1890. Only five pastors, three theological students and three active Lutheran laymen were able to attend this meeting, and one of these was Mato Kosyk, whose parish was only 20 miles to the north-west of Sterling. Their discussions led them to decide on a definite break from the Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Nebraska, to form a new German-speaking Synod to be connected with the General Synod of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of North America, whose name would be the German Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Nebraska. Kosyk and two others were appointed as a committee to draw up a provisional syno-

<sup>73</sup> In the letter given here in the Appendix, Kosyk implies that he was the immediate successor of Pastor Stockfeld, who was the founder of this parish, according to its Kirchenbuch (cf. Sec. 2(III) and footnote 15). However, the Kirchenbuch of the Stockfeld parish lists its successive pastors as G. E. Kraemer (1881), C. Dornerburg (1884–7), T. M. Frankenfeld (1888), M. Kossick (1889–1895), ...

<sup>74</sup> The four pastors preceding Kosyk do not appear in the list of Nebraska Synod pastors given in the *Story of the Midwest Synod*, on pp. 162–7. This parish is included in the roster of congregations given in this book (p. 188), but is described as "independent", not affiliated to the German Nebraska Synod at any time. Nevertheless, according to its Kirchenbuch, all of the pastors who succeeded Kosyk in this parish were of the German Nebraska Synod, until the parish was disbanded in 1932. The *Story of the Midwest Synod* states on p. 188 that the Princeton parish was established in 1881 by Rev. J. F. Kuhlmann, and disbanded in 1936; both of these statements are contradicted by its Kirchenbuch.

<sup>75</sup> *Story of Midwest Synod*, pp. 1–5. See also Chr. Sick, 'Aus Sterling, Nebraska', *Lutherischer Zions-Bote*, 1908, p. 237. The demands made arose from much deeper causes, which were responsible for the division between the German-speaking and English-speaking pastors. See *Story of the Midwest Synod*, pp. 37–41.

dical constitution. The first meeting of the new Synod took place at Lanham (Nebraska) in September of the same year, and the Synod became recognized and accepted by the General Synod in July 1891.<sup>76</sup>

Thus it was that Mato Kosyk became one of the founding fathers of the German Nebraska Synod. Owing to his long life-span, he was for many years (from 1926 onwards) the only surviving foundation pastor, and this was indeed his main claim to fame in America.

Yet that first day at Sterling, on 24 July 1890, was a disturbing day for Kosyk, in another way, as he recalls in the letter reprinted in the Appendix here. In the streets of Sterling, he heard the sound of his native tongue: indeed, the layman delegate from Sterling (Johann Rulla by name) was also a Lower Sorb, who had emigrated to Nebraska from Gozdż (Gosda, Kr. Spremberg) in 1881. As a result, he did not return to the meeting after the morning session, but apparently spent the rest of his day visiting and speaking with the many Lower Sorbian families in Sterling.<sup>77-78</sup> He then had no further taste for the organizational details necessary for the new Synod, and returned home, his head no doubt filled with Sorbian thoughts from the encounters of that day.

Kosyk was not particularly active subsequently in the affairs of the German Nebraska Synod. In the first decade of the new Synod, he was absent from the Annual Convention more often than not and he was not involved in any further committee activities. In 1895, he decided to give up the pastorship of the Stockfeld parish and he left the pastor's house at Princeton on 30 September of that year. However, this was not long after the Panic of 1893, times were still difficult, and also the 1895 harvest had failed. Many parishes which had lost their pastor could not seek a replacement, through lack of the wherewithal to support him. No call came for Kosyk, and he settled for a time with his family in a house at Roca, a small town in Lancaster County, about six miles north of Princeton. Without income, he was forced to borrow money to

<sup>76</sup> The actions taken by the German Conference were not strictly legal. See *Story of the Midwest Synod*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>77</sup> A summary account of the Sorbian families at Sterling, based on the researches of the first author, has been given by Friso Mětšk in *Rozhlad*, 1974, pp. 116-7.

<sup>78</sup> A letter written by Kosyk in 1924 (in *Chrestomatija dolnoserbskego pismowstwa*, II, p. 144) recalls a visit which he made to the Sorbs at Sterling at some time long past. Is he referring to the visit in 1890? All the arguments are against this. His 1924 letter refers to missionary work, which was not the purpose of this 1890 meeting. He writes of a sermon he preached there about the old Sorbian gods. This suggests a missionary festival, for a sermon about the Heathen Mission was usually included on such a Sunday. In any case, 24 July 1890 was a Friday. On the other hand, Kosyk could well have come to Sterling as a guest preacher for a missionary festival at some later date during his seven years at Princeton. We have been unable to find any record of such a visit to Sterling, but few records have survived for missionary festivals before 1900.

get through this period.<sup>79</sup> Fortunately, a call came in the Spring, from the small parish of the Trinity church at Stamford (Nebraska), in Harlan County, sited on Beaver Creek and about 25 miles south-south-west from the major town of Holdrege, and Kosyk took up this pastorship on 4 July 1896. In 1898 he reported 45 communicant members for the Stamford parish, according to the German Nebraska Synod Minutes for that year. Kosyk was not long in this parish. In January 1899, the pastor of St. John's parish at Ohiowa (in Fillmore County, Nebraska, and about 12 miles south-west from its capital, Geneva) resigned, and a call was sent to Kosyk, who accepted it and settled in at Ohiowa at the end of April of that year.<sup>80</sup>

There are many more records of Kosyk's activities during his years at Ohiowa. He was present at most of the Annual Conventions of the Synod through this period, at Westboro (Missouri) on 24–28 September 1901, at Greenleaf (Kansas) on 10–14 September 1902, at Hanover (Kansas) on 2–6 September 1903, at Yutan (Nebraska) on 13–17 September 1905, at Wisner (Nebraska) on 19–23 September 1906, and at Bloomfield (Nebraska) on 18–22 September 1907. In 1901, Kosyk reported 70 communicant members for the St. John's parish; this number increased over the years to 85, according to his report for 1906. Through these years, 1899 to 1907, the name Kossick appears quite frequently in the missionary festival reports published in the *Lutherischer Zions-Bote*, but he was never the author of such a report, as far as we can tell.

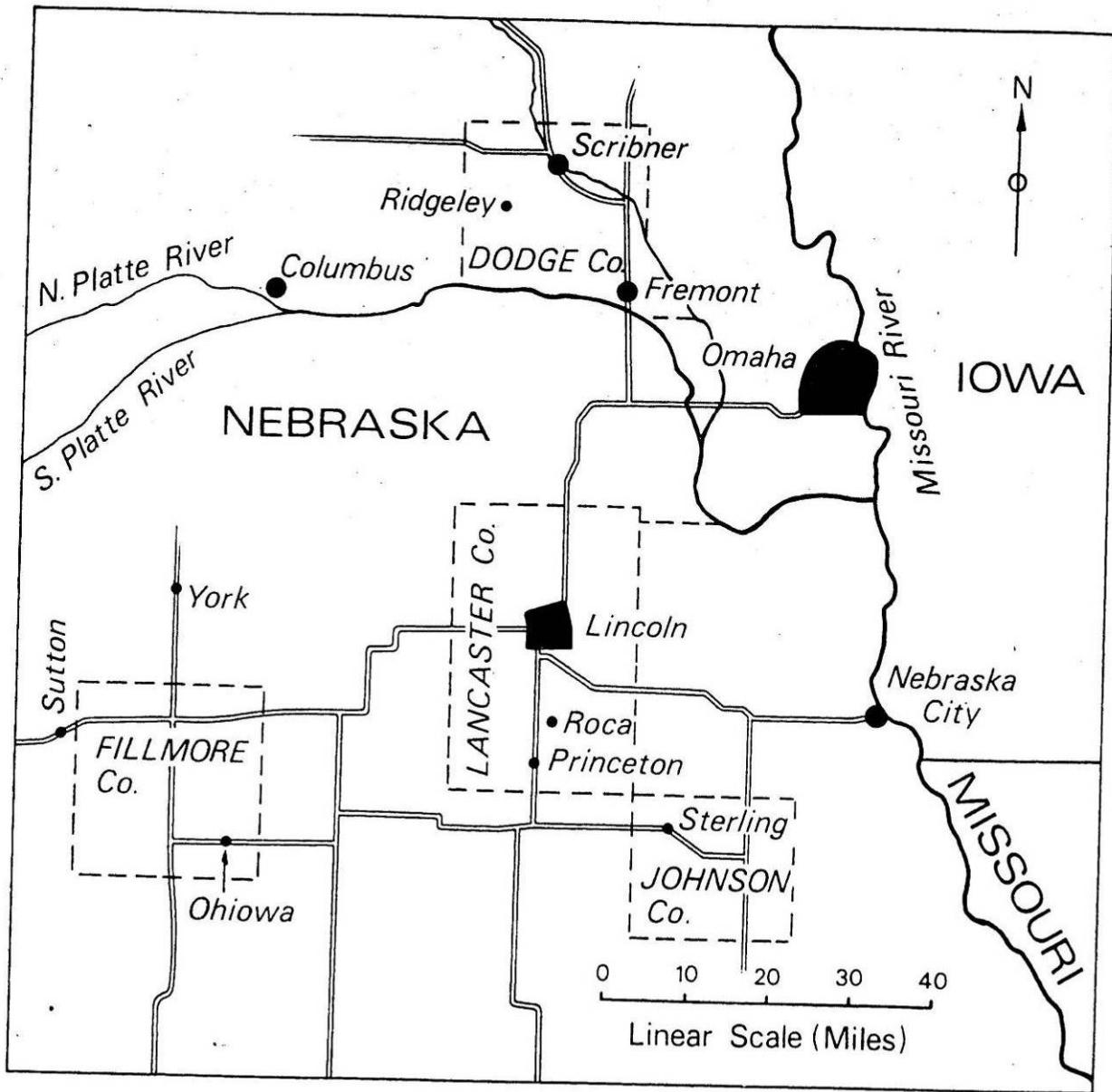
On 8 December 1907, Kosyk received a call from the parish of the Church of Our Redeemer, in the town of El Reno, the capital of Canadian County, Oklahoma, and sited on the North Canadian River.<sup>81</sup> This was frontier country, both for the German Nebraska Synod and for white settlement in America. El Reno was originally Fort Reno, situated in the "Unassigned Lands" of the Oklahoma Territory.<sup>82</sup> These lands were first opened for white settlement in

<sup>79</sup> The evidence for this is given in a letter written to his mother from Roca on 26 March 1896, not long after learning of his father's death on 17 January of that year. The original letter is held in the Sorbian Cultural Archives at Bautzen.

<sup>80</sup> The Minutes of the 1899 Annual Convention of the German Nebraska Synod, held 2–24 September at Hooper (Nebraska), referring to the election of Pastor F. Schwarz's successor, record as follows: "Die Gemeinde daselbst erwählte P. M. Kossick von Stamford als seinen Nachfolger, welcher Ende April dorthin übersiedelte". There were two parishes of the German Nebraska Synod at Ohiowa, both churches having the name St. John's. Kosyk's church was in the 'town parish', the church being in the country, several miles north-east of Ohiowa. The other church was in the 'country parish' and stood about 4.5 miles south-west of Ohiowa.

<sup>81</sup> The Minutes of the 1908 Annual Convention of the German Nebraska Synod, held 9–13 September at Grenville (Nebraska), record as follows: "Am 8. Dez. erhielt Pastor Kossick einen Beruf von der Gemeinde zu El Reno, Okla., dem er Anfang des neuen Jahres Folge leistete."

<sup>82</sup> The present Oklahoma state was formed by the U.S. Congress in 1906, by uniting the Oklahoma Territory and the Indian Territory. The Oklahoma Territory consisted of two parts, the Cherokee Strip to the north and the Unassigned Lands



3. Map of the district of Princeton, showing also Ohiowa, Roca and Sterling in relation to Lincoln, the capital of Nebraska.

the "Run of 1889", when hundreds of thousands of intending settlers lining the border were informed by a signal that they could then move and stake their claim, according to a specified legal procedure. There were many outlaws in these lands during the first decade of settlement, but the El Reno district had settled down to a law-abiding life by the time that Kosyk settled there,<sup>83</sup> early in 1908. It appears most likely that Kosyk was attracted by this frontier

to the south, both of which became the property of the U.S. Government in the years following the Civil War. For about three decades after 1861, no settlers were permitted to occupy any land in these Territories.

<sup>83</sup> His address at El Reno was 907 South Hoff.

atmosphere; he once described himself as "having a restless disposition".<sup>84</sup> There was certainly room for missionary work in Oklahoma, and it is on record that, in his second year at El Reno, Pastor Kosyk did organize a new parish in the community of Union City, about eight miles south of El Reno.<sup>85</sup> These were small parishes. In 1908, Kosyk reported 50 communicant members for the El Reno parish. In 1909, Kosyk's report gave 30 communicant members for the El Reno parish, and 13 for the Union City parish, and the numbers remained approximately the same until these parishes disbanded, in the years about 1916.

During these years at El Reno, Kosyk had little personal contact with the German Nebraska Synod. In 1908 and thereafter, he was marked "abwesend und entschuldigt" on the attendance roll printed in the Minutes for the Annual Conventions of the Synod, until a motion was passed in 1935 that he and certain other pastors in retirement should be automatically excused from attendance. It was a long and hard journey from Oklahoma to the various towns in Nebraska where the Annual Conventions were generally held.

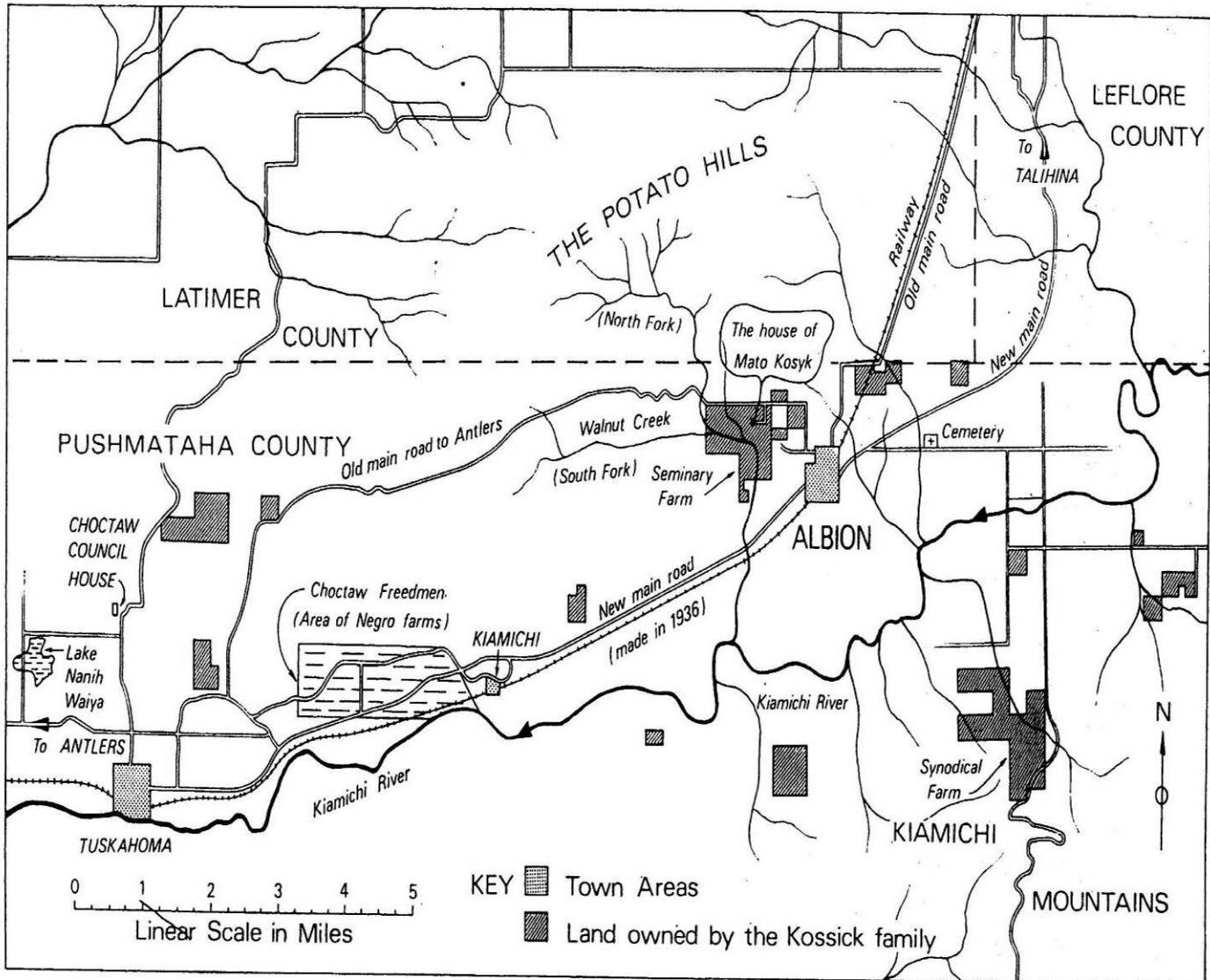
In Oklahoma, the German-speaking elements among the settlers were proportionately smaller than had been the case in Nebraska. Consequently, the Oklahoma parishes tended to have rather smaller congregations and were correspondingly unstable. Further, the occurrence of World War I had a very considerable influence on all the German-speaking Synods in America, shrinking the size of the congregation in every parish and reducing the area covered by their active parishes. It was fatal for almost all of the Oklahoma parishes, and for the parishes of El Reno and Union City in particular. Fortunately, Kosyk was spared the trauma of this period of difficulty and decay for his Oklahoma parishes, for he had resigned these pastorships in 1913, in order to retire to the farm at Albion (Pushmataha County, Oklahoma) which he had purchased in 1908. The Union City parish lapsed on Kosyk's resignation, and no successor could be found for the El Reno parish,<sup>86</sup> which was disbanded in 1917. His resignation represented an early retirement, for he was aged only 60 years at this time. However, his pastorship had become somewhat strenuous for him, whereas the family wealth, stemming initially from his wife's inheritance,<sup>87</sup> made it financially unnecessary for him to continue with this work.

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix

<sup>85</sup> This is recorded under the heading "Neue Gemeinden" in the Minutes of the 1909 Annual Convention of the German Nebraska Synod, held 5–10 October at Lincoln (Nebraska), as follows: "Pastor M. Kossick, El Reno, Oklahoma, organisierte am 25. Oktober 1908 die Ev.-Luth. St. Paulus-Gemeinde zu Union City, Oklahoma."

<sup>86</sup> The Union City parish does not appear after 1912, nor the El Reno parish after 1916, in the lists of parish reports (financial and membership) given in the Minutes of the Annual Conventions of the German Nebraska Synod.

<sup>87</sup> We have no documentary evidence to demonstrate this, but it is plausible, since we know (Sec. 3(IX) above) that her mother died in 1891. It is generally believed to have been so, by those who knew him at Albion, and the same statement also appears on p. 30 of the *Story of the Midwest Synod*.



2. Map of the Albion district in the Pushmataha, Latimer and Le Flore Counties, Oklahoma, showing the location of Kosyk's house and of all the land owned by him and his family at one time or another. We are much indebted to Mr. Chauncey E. Calvin of Talihina for providing us with a large scale map of the country between Talihina and Tuska-  
homa, marked with the grid appropriate for locating the lands from the information given by the Land Records at Antlers, Oklahoma.

Also, he had become rather "hard of hearing", at a time when there was an increasing need for him to use the English language, with which he was not comfortable.<sup>88</sup> His last sermon at El Reno was given on Sunday Jubilate 1913 and the family moved to settle at Albion. Probably he never gave any sermons after his retirement for there was no Lutheran Church in the County of Pushmataha, nor in any of the neighbouring Counties.<sup>89</sup>

However, Pastor Kosyk remained well-known in the German Nebraska Synod (later known as the Midwest Synod). In 1938, he was listed as the senior pastor of the Synod. In his last two years, 1939 and 1940, he gave many substantial donations to further particular institutions and objectives of the Synod; most of these are recorded in the *Lutherischer Herold*, under the heading "Quittungen aus dem Schatzamt der Ev. Luth. Synode im Mittelwesten". Even after his death, the name of "Kossick" obtruded itself before the Synod again and again for many years.<sup>90</sup> This was the result of the land donations Kosyk had made to the Synod in 1930–31. The Oklahoma Lands Committee (referred to above in Sec. 3(V–VI)) was set up in the Synod about 1937 to clarify the circumstances concerning the title and the taxes for this land, and to administer its use. In 1947, it was recommended that this land should be sold, but the legal complications connected with the "Kossick land donation" dragged on for some years, until this Committee were able to make their final report at the 1952 Annual Convention of the Synod.

### 5. Reminiscences of Kosyk's Neighbours and Acquaintances

In 1973 and 1974 a number of people who had known Kosyk were interviewed by Richard Dalitz. They are as follows:

1. Mrs. Nona Ingwin (née Jackson), who as a child (born 1900) lived a mile or two further than Kosyk along the then main road from Albion and passed the Kosyk property every day on her way to school. She knew Kosyk well by sight but knew Mrs. Anna Kossick much better. After marriage she moved to a different part of the district, and thereafter saw the Kossicks only rarely.
2. Mr. Dalpaz Ashworth, a tenant on property owned by Kosyk, for the season 1929–30.

<sup>88</sup> Those who knew Kosyk personally, both in the German Nebraska Synod and at Albion, state that his English was grammatically excellent, with a good vocabulary, but quite difficult to understand owing to poor pronunciation.

<sup>89</sup> It is frequently stated that Kosyk was pastor of the parish at Albion. This misunderstanding probably arises from the entry 'Albion' against his name in the list of pastors given in the Annual Minutes of the German Nebraska (and later, the Midwest) Synod and in the national directories of all Lutheran pastors, which formed part of the various Lutheran Almanacs issued each year.

<sup>90</sup> This occurred to such an extent that some Lutheran pastors otherwise well informed have retained the impression that Kosyk was still alive during the work of the Oklahoma Lands Committee in the late 1940s.

3. Mrs. Emma Barnes (née Dean). The Dean family were close friends of Mrs. Wilma Kossick (née Filter), who after Kosyk's death moved with all her possessions into a house on the Deans' property. Mrs. Barnes is now living in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
4. Mrs. Elnora Bryan (formerly Dupree, née Danielson), who married Ben Dupree in 1919. The Dupree family occupied a farm adjacent to Kosyk's farm, north of it and on the opposite side of the main road (at that time)<sup>91</sup> from Albion to the southern parts of Pushmataha County, and Mrs. Ben Dupree, following her marriage, moved to live on the Dupree farm, which brought her into close daily contact with the Kossick household for more than twenty years. Ben Dupree had been a contemporary and close friend of George Kossick and was with him when he died of apoplexy in 1915. Dupree was an able man with a wide variety of practical skills and after George's death, the Kossick family soon came to depend on him for guidance and assistance in practical matters arising in the daily work on the farm. Thus, for a long period, the Duprees were the Kossicks' closest neighbours and friends. After Mato Kosyk's death, Ben Dupree worked the Kossick farm, first as a tenant of the Martin Luther Seminary of the German Nebraska Synod and later as the owner. The Ben Dupree family moved to live in the Kossick house from about 1942 and their purchase of the Kossick farm was completed in March 1949. In March 1958, they sold the Kossick house and farm to Olen W. Whitfield and retired to Tuskahoma (the nearest township to the west of Albion). Ben Dupree died there in January 1959, and Mrs. Dupree (still referred to locally by this name) married again some years later. Widowed again, Mrs. Bryan is now living in Tuskahoma.
5. Mr. Clark Chapman, the Kossick family's bank manager in Albion (approximately 1920–24), now living at Talihina, Oklahoma.
6. Mr. Alan and Mrs. Blanche Dry (and Mr. Alan Dry, junior), who were tenants on the Kossick farm from March 1940 to 1944, living about a quarter of a mile from the homestead. They are now living in Albion.
7. Rev. William Goede is the son of Rev. Carl Goede, who was a pastor (and at one time president) of the German Nebraska Synod and who in the mid-1930s retired to Tuskahoma upon the persuasion of his friend, Mato Kosyk. William Goede was appointed by the Synod to look after the administration of the land (about 1.7 square miles) which had been given them by Kosyk (while he retained the right to rent the land, if he so desired, and to occupy the house rent-free for the rest of his life). William and his family lived in a house on this land, close to Kosyk's house, from

<sup>91</sup> Today, the main road from Albion to southern Pushmataha runs along the valley of the Kiamichi river and does not enter the foothills of the Potato Hills, where the Kossick farm is located. Thus, the present main road runs some distance to the south of the Kossick farm.

May 1936 to July 1937, after which they moved to Tuskahoma in order to be closer to his parents there. He was in constant contact with Kosyk up to the latter's death. William Goede's wife, Frieda, who had been born at Ohiowa during Kosyk's pastorship there and who had been baptized by him, was also interviewed. They both now live in retirement in Colorado.

8. Mrs. Thelma Icord, who lived in a house on the Kossick property for some years, until May 1941. She and her husband sat with the body of Kosyk until midnight on the day he died, following local custom.

9. Rev. A. B. J. Lentz, the Secretary of the German Nebraska Synod 1933-41 and author of a large part of the *Story of the Midwest Synod U.L.C.A., 1890-1950* (see Sec. 3(V) above). He visited Kosyk, probably in 1937, concerning the land made over to the Synod. In 1939, he wrote a letter to Kosyk concerning the meeting of pastors at Sterling in 1890, at which the German Nebraska Synod was founded. Kosyk's reply is reproduced here in the Appendix.

10. Mrs. Hattie Sims (formerly, and still known as, Radcliff), whose first husband Mr. Ivan Radcliff was the postmaster in Albion from 1940 until his retirement in 1966 and who then acted as postmistress herself until 1969.

11. Mrs. Geraldine Whitfield, the present occupant of the house which Kosyk built on his arrival in Albion in 1913 and lived in for the rest of his life. Her husband (died July 1960) bought the house from Ben Dupree in March 1958.

From visits to the area and conversations with these people, it has proved possible to compose the following picture of Kosyk's years in America.

Kosyk's marriage to Anna Wehr was arranged by correspondence<sup>92</sup> and her reason for coming to America was (according to her own statement) "to marry Mr. Kosyk".<sup>93</sup> She arrived in the U.S.A. on 5 November 1890 as a pas-

<sup>92</sup> We know from the words of Juro Kula, Kosyk's boyhood friend in Wjerbno, that Kosyk had written from America to him and to others in an effort to find a wife from Lusatia. Kula attributes the Kosyk-Wehr marriage to the efforts of Herr Drabow. Cf. P. Nali, *Zetkach přiwuzneho Mata Kosyka*, Nowa doba, 7. October 1953, p. 4. However, their worlds in Germany were far apart. Kosyk was the son of a peasant in Wjerbno, whereas Anna Wehr was the daughter of the Junker who owned the Rittergut of Duszno. Kosyk's life in Germany was spent between Leipzig and Lusatia, whereas she had been born at Duszno and had spent all her life with her mother in Kreis Mogilno, in the far east of Posen province.

<sup>93</sup> Anna Kossick said that she had always wanted to go to America and to live in the New World, but that her mother would not allow her to go; also, that she had always loved the Church and had wished to marry a pastor. Mr. Kosyk had been "her bridge to America", she said, since her mother had finally relented and let her go to America when she knew that her daughter was going there to marry Pastor Kosyk. These statements by Mrs. Anna Kossick were recalled to R. Dalitz, quite independently and without leading questions, by both Mrs. Angwin and Mrs. Bryan.

senger on the steamship "Werra" of the North German Lloyd line (which had sailed from Bremen to New York) and reached Princeton, Nebraska, only 14 days before the wedding.<sup>94</sup> Kosyk's own statement that the marriage was not particularly happy and that his wife was not well inclined towards his poetry is borne out by the recollections of those that knew them. Her active, outgoing personality contrasted with his more restrained and introspective manner, and she was popular in the district as a "doer of good works". She loved the church and had played the organ at services at El Reno. It is believed by the people in the district that Kosyk became moderately wealthy as the result of land transactions both at El Reno and in his earlier Nebraska parishes.<sup>95</sup>

The coolness between the Kossicks increased after the death of their son, George, a blow which so distressed Anna Kossick that for years afterwards she would spend summer evenings weeping beside the grave. George's room was left closed and untouched for many years after his death. His body was buried at his mother's insistence on the Kossick land beside the road to the house, despite the fact that the site was on a rocky ridge so that the grave had to be blasted out of the rock.

There was no official burial ground in Albion at that time. When Anna died in 1929 she was, in accordance with her own request, buried beside her son. The graves are now unmarked except by wild roses. Mato Kosyk disapproved of the burial place chosen by his wife, first for her son and later for herself, considering a cemetery to be the proper place. In 1915, the nearest cemetery was at Talihina, in Le Flore county, about 8 miles to the north-east of Albion, but a number of burials had been made in an unofficial cemetery, a pasture provided by an Albion farmer. By the time of Anna's death Albion had a well-established town cemetery.

Kosyk's land and farm at Albion were purchased while the family was still at El Reno. There were two major pieces. The 380-acre piece on which Kosyk built his house was in the foothills of the Potato Hills region, straddling Walnut Creek, a stream tributary to the Kiamichi river. The house was built at the end of a rocky ridge overlooking this stream and the pasture lands running down to it, a magnificently scenic site. This property was the joint possession of Mato and Anna, and was purchased in September 1908 from a Choctaw half-breed named Martha Johnson and her husband.<sup>96</sup> This land was on the

<sup>94</sup> The date of her arrival was ascertained from the shipping records in the U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C. It is consistent with Kosyk's statements in a letter to his mother (dated 4 December 1890), now in the Sorbian Cultural Archives in Bautzen.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. 2(VI) above

<sup>96</sup> The price paid by the Kossicks was \$1500. It is of interest to remark that the Midwest Synod records show that the price fetched by the sale of this farm in 1949 was \$800.

whole unprofitable. Although crops of maize were grown there,<sup>97</sup> it was mostly useful for grazing. Just below the house there was an orchard, of which Kosyk was especially proud. The 510-acre piece was on the far (south) side of the Kiamichi river, on the river flats where the soil was rich and fertile. This land was purchased by Anna Kossick in June 1909 from a group of landowners who had combined to invest heavily in Albion land when the Indian Territory became part of the State of Oklahoma.<sup>98</sup> Only a small part of this land had been cleared for farming; the remainder of it was well wooded and provided much timber which went to the saw-mills then operating at Albion. A number of smaller pieces of land in the Albion district were also purchased by the Kossick family in the years 1908–9; these were mostly worked by tenant farmers in later years. To the Kossicks, "the farm" meant the hill property on which their homestead stood. Although Mato Kosyk worked a good deal in the orchard, especially as an evening relaxation from his beloved writing, and took a close interest in the farm animals, the real farmer in the family was George, at the time when the Kossick family settled at Albion.

Their closest neighbours were the Duprees, with whom they had daily contact. Mrs. Bryan (formerly Dupree) recalls how in the 1920s Anna Kossick would visit them almost every evening for the warmth of conversation. Sometimes Mato would come down to their house with his notebook and tell them about the poem he was writing. He would try to explain it to them in English, but often complained that his poetry did not fit the English language well. The Dupree family were often called in to translate his English to local people who had business with him. Although they did not know German, the Duprees could understand the English spoken by Germans, having grown up with German-speaking neighbours in other places.

During the last twenty years of his life, Mato Kosyk spent most of his days in his study, reading and writing, with his shelves of books beside him. In winter months he used to sit by a kerosene lamp, wearing a green eye-shade. Whenever his tenants or others came to see him on business, he would come out and deal with them briefly, then return to his study. He was hard of hearing, although not severely so, and this, together with his difficulty in making himself understood in English, seems to have made human contact difficult for him. In the Albion district he was generally regarded as an unappro-

---

<sup>97</sup> The following news item, in the 9 July 1915 issue of the *Albion Advocate*, attests to this and gives some flavour of the Albion community. It reads (in full): "Mrs. Annie Kosick (sic) was in the city Thursday and reports the corn crop on her place is fine."

<sup>98</sup> The price paid for this land was \$800. In October 1909, the ownership was transferred to George Kossick for a price of \$1500, a rather curious transaction. In July 1950, this land, together with a further 190 acres which Mato Kosyk had purchased for \$640 in 1909, was sold by the Midwest Synod for \$1310, according to the records of its Committee on Oklahoma Land Holdings.

chable and difficult man, mistrustful of those who came across his path. Those who came closer to him considered that he had been given good reason to be mistrustful of local people. The latter considered him wealthy and therefore fair game, and this was a rough district, outside U.S. civil law until 1908. Small-holders would borrow money from him to buy seed for their crops, then spend it at once on other goods with no attempt at repayment. Much timber simply disappeared from his river property, and people would help themselves to his corn and cotton crops when his back was turned. However, those who borrowed from him for their crops and paid their debts when harvest time came, found him fair and willing to support them again when there was need, but these people were few.

Kosyk's social contacts were essentially limited to the Dupree, Goede and Bailey families.<sup>99</sup> However, even Carl and William Goede, who were well-educated, had little interest in his thoughts and his poetry. William Goede recalls Kosyk offering them copies of his volumes of poetry, which, being unable to understand them, they did not accept. Later, after Kosyk's death, William Goede asked his widow whether he might have one of these books, as a keepsake, but she would not allow any of Kosyk's writings out of her possession, regarding them as of great value, even though she could not understand them.

There was no Lutheran church in Pushmataha County, nor in the adjacent counties. Although Rev. W. Goede preached regularly at the Methodist Church in Albion, after it became no longer possible to find a circuit rider, Kosyk neither preached nor even attended church during his 38 years there. His language difficulties, together with denominational scruples, are sufficient to explain this.

We know from Kosyk's writings of his interest in the American Indians,<sup>100</sup> and the fact that the Choctaw Nation had their Capitol, their meeting-place and centre of government, quite close to Albion might well be thought significant. Their fine Council House, erected in 1883 when they still governed these lands, stands about five miles west of Albion, near Tuskahoma. Rev. W. Goede, however, who lived at Tuskahoma and knew the chief of the Choctaw Nation quite well,<sup>101</sup> does not recall Kosyk showing any interest in them.

<sup>99</sup> J. M. Bailey was one of the earliest settlers at Albion; indeed, it was he who named the township, in memory of his native England. John Bailey worked to attract suitable settlers to the district, to build up the township he had established, and played a large part in Kosyk's decision to invest in Albion land. The Kossick family frequently went to Bailey for local advice in their earliest years at Albion, and soon grew to trust him completely. For this reason, and because Mrs. Bailey was from a German family, these two families became quite close.

<sup>100</sup> For example, *Rozgrono z Indianom*, *Indianarka*, and *Indiana*

<sup>101</sup> His name was Durante and he served as Sunday School Superintendent at Tuskahoma.

He even doubts whether Kosyk ever met any members of the Choctaw tribe.<sup>102</sup> There is also to this day a settlement of negroes living several miles west of Albion (descendants of the slaves brought by the Choctaws from Mississippi when they were moved thence into the Indian Territory in the 1830s), but there is nothing to show that Kosyk had any contact with them either.

After settling on his farm at Albion, Kosyk acquired much land in an unintentional way. In those early years, many people took advantage of his kindly and trusting nature to borrow large sums of money from him against the security of land which was overvalued (often with official connivance). In due course they would default, leaving him with this land, which he could not sell without suffering a great loss.<sup>103</sup> Kosyk was liable for taxes on all this land, until finally, faced with growing and intolerable taxes on land which was unproductive and had little sale value,<sup>104</sup> he decided to donate his property to the Church, which would be protected by the United States law exempting religious and charitable holdings from taxes. He took this action soon after his wife's death. The 510 acres down by the Kiamichi river were transferred to the ownership of the German Nebraska Synod in June 1930 and were thenceforth referred to as the Synodical farm. The ownership of the hill farm with the homestead was transferred to the Martin Luther Seminary (of the German Nebraska Synod) at Lincoln, Nebraska, in July 1931 and Kosyk's farm was thenceforth referred to as the Seminary farm.

In the early 1920s, Mato Kosyk said that, if he outlived Anna, he would leave his land and his possessions to his native village.<sup>105</sup> The reason why this was not done is probably given by the story we have just told. In a letter<sup>106</sup> to Bogumił Śwjela in 1929, Kosyk wrote:

Ty wěsće groniš: „Wudaj se zasej domoj!“ — Rad, gaby te farmy tudy pśedaś mogł. Howacej to njejžo.

He could not sell the farms, and he could not afford to continue paying the

<sup>102</sup> However, *Rozgrono z Indianom* describes a meeting and conversation with a Choctaw Indian in the Albion district in 1927/8.

<sup>103</sup> He described his feelings about one such episode, which took place shortly before the death of his wife, in a letter to Bogumił Śwjela dated 19 February 1929. See Mato Kosyk : *Wuběrk z jogo spisow*, pp. 131–3

<sup>104</sup> In the late 1920s, many small landowners could not meet their county property taxes and had to default, surrendering their land to the county authorities. As a result, there was much land for sale in Pushmataha County and the price fetched by land which had cost \$2 to \$5 an acre in 1910 fell to \$0.25 an acre by 1930.

<sup>105</sup> A recollection given us by Mrs. Nona Angwin.

<sup>106</sup> See note 103 above

<sup>107</sup> We cannot be precise about this date. Rev. W. Goede visited Albion with his parents and his family, and camped for some time on the Seminary farm, during the summer of 1934. Wilma Filter was not in Albion at that time. We know that she came to Albion before 14 March 1936 because that is the date on a land transfer deed, recording the sale to Wilma Filter, for a nominal sum, of 80 acres of Kosyk land in another part of the Albion district.

taxes on them. He could simply have walked off them, leaving them to the county, and returned to Lusatia, but beyond these properties he had only a modest capital, perhaps insufficient to give him a secure future in Lusatia, at the age of 77 years. At Albion, he had free use of his house and sufficient capital in reserve to see him through to the end of his life, and he had friends, the Duprees and the Goedes, close at hand for emergencies. The decision he made seems inevitable, given his circumstances.

After the death of Anna, Mato Kosyk had a lonely and difficult time. He advertised for a housekeeper many times, but the girls who took the post generally left after some months, owing to the loneliness of the house and, since they did not know German, the difficulties of communicating with Kosyk. In the early 1930s a young housekeeper was hired from Germany probably through a Lutheran organization there, and Kosyk was very pleased with her. Mr. Ashworth recalls meeting them in Albion, when Kosyk introduced the young lady with him, saying, "This is my nurse. She has come to close my eyes." But the girl died at Albion three months after her arrival, and Kosyk again sought local help.

In 1935, in reply to an advertisement for a nurse-housekeeper, Wilma Filter was engaged by Kosyk.<sup>107</sup> She was German-born but came to him from the German-speaking area of Texas. Those who knew her then describe her as short, blond and heavily built. She spoke fluent German and broken English, which the local people nevertheless found easier to understand than that spoken by Kosyk. From Kosyk's death certificate, we know that she was 58 years old when he died. According to several local people, she had at one time been a nurse in a German Army hospital, probably around the time of the First World War and the Dry family heard from her that she had had one of her breasts torn off by a bayonet. She stayed with Kosyk until his death, and there is no doubt that her presence alleviated his difficulties during the last years of his life. . .

In 1938 Kosyk and Wilma Filter took the train to Talihina (in Le Flore County), where they were married by a Justice of the Peace. The exact date of their marriage is not known, because the record was destroyed by a fire in Talihina in 1945, but the latest document known to us to bear the signature "Wilma Filter" is dated 13 June 1938.<sup>108</sup> The earliest document we have (a land transfer deed)<sup>109</sup> with the signature "Wilma Kossick" is dated 21 October 1938. We therefore presume the marriage to have taken place between those dates. It was done so quietly that only those who were closest to the Kossicks knew about it.

After Kosyk's death his house reverted to the Martin Luther Seminary,

<sup>108</sup> A letter written by her to B. Šwjela, now held in the Sorbian Cultural Archives.

<sup>109</sup> Recording the sale of 50 acres of land owned by Mrs. W. Kossick to Leonard Dean.

according to the agreement made in 1931. Wilma Kossick packed up all her husband's books, papers and other belongings and left the house within several days. She stayed with the Dean family for some months and the children of the family who were then aged 10–15 years, recall her arrival and her stay with them. She advertised for a position as nurse or housekeeper and early in 1941<sup>110</sup> she left, with her boxes of possessions, for an unknown destination, probably in Texas.

There was a local belief that the Kosyk family had great wealth, but this belief had little basis in fact by the 1920s, according to their bank manager and business adviser, Mr. Chapman.<sup>111</sup> The monetary gifts to the Church in his last two years (see 3(II–III) above), together with the earlier gifts of property to the Martin Luther Seminary and the German Nebraska Synod, represent the major part of Kosyk's wealth, after the death of Anna. In addition, he gave substantial areas of land to Carl and Frieda Goede (in 1931 and 1936, respectively) and to his future wife, Wilma Filter (in 1936). Although the land made over to the Church appeared at first to be merely a liability, it proved in the long run to be an asset and was eventually sold for a substantial sum.<sup>112</sup> The Kosyk family were no doubt better off than their neighbours, but they lived frugally, supporting themselves from the produce of their farm. They had no vehicle other than a heavy farm-cart, and generally walked wherever they needed to go.

In his last years thoughts of death were often with Mato Kosyk, as his poetry of that period shows. He frequently spoke of his approaching end and made preparations for it. He asked his friend and neighbour, Ben Dupree, to make a plain coffin for his burial. He bought the wood for it at the saw-mill in Albion and supervised its construction. He gave instructions that he should be buried according to the rites of the Lutheran Church, to be performed by Carl and Wiliam Goede, in the Albion cemetery – "in the proper place" (as he said) – and not beside his wife and son on the farm.

Although enfeebled by age in his last few years and often ill then for days at a time, Kosyk's health was generally good. Indeed, his vigour was some-

<sup>110</sup> She stayed at least until 30 January 1941, the date on a deed signed by her, recording the sale of her remaining land to T. H. Myers.

<sup>111</sup> Let us briefly estimate their wealth in their last years at El Reno. They were then purchasing much Albion land, for a total expenditure of \$3225, as far as we can trace their transactions. They also owned appreciable saleable land at El Reno. We have seen a \$1500 bond (15 shares at \$100 each in the Choctaw Portland Cement Works) purchased by Kosyk in 1910 (but valueless today), and there may well have been other such investments. To estimate their capital at El Reno is less straightforward. We believe that their bank balance was about \$3000 in the early 1920s. Also, they had built a house on their farm, and they had made substantial loans to persons not known to us, to judge by the area of land which had come to them through mortgage default. It appears reasonable to conclude that their wealth at El Reno was not less than \$10,000, a rather considerable sum in those days.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. note 98 above

times quite striking, as we know from the report of the committee which inspected his property in 1936 (see p. 52 above). His final illness, however, lasted only a few days and news of it had not reached his friends at Tuska-homa before he was dead.

Since there was no Lutheran church within at least 50 miles of Albion, there had to be a compromise in the funeral ceremony. The most appropriate local church was Methodist and the church service was carried out there according to the Methodist rite. At the graveside, Pastor C. Goede performed the Lutheran funeral service, assisted by Pastor W. Goede, both wearing the appropriate vestments. This much surprised some of the local people who were not familiar with the Lutheran or Catholic religious practices. A few days after the interment a simple grave-stone was set up by Ben Dupree, in accordance with wishes expressed to him by Kosyk, with the following inscription:

Matthew Kossick  
June 18, 1853  
Nov. 22, 1940

## APPENDIX

The following letter was written by Mato Kosyk in reply to a letter from Rev. A. B. J. Lentz, who was the Secretary of the Midwest Synod at that time, requesting information from Kosyk concerning details about the meeting of Pastors in Sterling (Nebraska) at which the new Church at Sterling was dedicated, and at which the Pastors gathered there discussed for several days and finally established the German Nebraska Synod. This letter was found in the Archives of the Nebraska Synod at Omaha by Rev. H. Farstrup in response to a letter of enquiry from us, and we are glad to acknowledge here the considerable assistance which he gave us in connection with our enquiries.

It is written partly in Fraktur (evidently Kosyk's own hand) and partly in Latin script (probably the hand of Wilma Kossick writing at Kosyk's dictation).

Albion, Okla. 24 April 1939

**Fraktur** Lieber Bruder Lentz!  
Da nach Ihrem frdl. Brief v. Apr. 17 die numerierten Fragen meist die Einweihung der Kirche in Sterling betreffen, so kann ich sie leider nicht beantworten, weil ich bei der Einweihung nicht zugegen war, wohl aber bei der Gründung der Synode am 24 Juli 1890 mittätig gewesen. Damals erfuhr ich, daß ein Teil der Gemeinde in St. meine Landleute waren nämlich Soraben oder Serben oder jetzt meist als Wenden bekannt aus der Niederlausitz. — (Da Herr P. Kossick sich nicht wohl fühlt, so bittet er mich nach seinem Diktat weiter zu schreiben.) Das veranlaßt mich vom Skeleton Questionaire einiges zu beantworten: geboren 18. Juni 1853 in Werben, b. Cottbus. Angefangen deutsch zu lernen im 9ten Lebensjahr und Latein im 13. L.Jahr bei dem Dorfpastor. Nach Besuch des Gymnasiums zu Cottbus war ich aus Liebe zum Volk und Muttersprache in wendischer Literatur tätig gewesen. Bereits durch verschiedene Gedichte, die

**Latin**

allgemeines Gefallen gefunden, wurde ich von der Geistlichkeit zur Mitarbeit am neuen Kirchengesangbuch aufgemuntert, da im alten jede Verszeile in richtiges Metrum and Endreim zu bringen war. Daneben sind später weitere Erzeugnisse erscheinen als:

- Mostly Fraktur**
- 1) Sserbska Swaźba (im hexametrischen Versmaß geschriebene Hochzeits-sitten)
  - 2) Sserbska sběrka dolnosserbskich pěšníow (Heft von 42 Gedichten)
  - 3) Pscherada markgrofa Gera (längere epische Dichtung)
  - 4) Dom a swět (Heimat u. Fremde (Welt) 2 Bücher über 200 Gedichte)
- Latin**
- Als ein immer etwas unruhiger Erdenpilger verzog ich nach Amerika, studierte weiter in Springfield und Chikago, Ill. und wurde 1885 in der Wartburg Synode zu Mt Pulaski zum Pfarramt ordiniert. Bedient folgende Gemeinden: Wellsburg, Ia., Ridgely, Neb., Princeton, Neb., Stamford, Neb., Ohiowa, Neb., und El Reno, Okla.  
In Ruhestand getreten 1914.
- Die Gemeinde in Princeton ist so viel ich weiß gegründet von P. Stockfeld, der zugleich Dr. der Medizin war. Nach seiner Resignation wurde ich sein Nachfolger. Wie gehört ist die Gemeinde längst eingegangen, vielleicht wegen Abnahme der Glieder, deren Bestand schon zu meiner Zeit unsicher erschien.
- Fraktur Fraktur**
- Mit brüderlichem Gruß M. Kossick  
P. S. Wie bekannt, haben in Texas die Wenden der Oberlausitz (Kgr. Sachsen) unter ihrem P. Kilian die Stadt Serbin u. Gemeinde gegründet. Jedenfalls wird das ihren Herrn Vater<sup>113</sup> interessieren oder schon bekannt sein — aber auch die Sprachen vergehen, ihr Grabesgeläut hier schon längst ausgeklungen, im alten Vaterlande ertönen sie noch in ihrer "eigenen Melodie" die Glocken singend von rätselhafter Zeitlichkeit<sup>114</sup> über Vergangenheit und Ewigkeit.

<sup>113</sup> i. e. Rev. Rudolf Lentz, who entered the German Nebraska Synod in 1909. He had been ordained in the Texas Synod in 1897 and spent 12 years in Texas parishes, where he would have learned about the Texas Upper Sorbian settlements.

<sup>114</sup> Alternative reading: "voll rätselhafter Zärtlichkeit".



1. *Photograph of Mato Kosyk and family. It is believed that this photograph was taken by their neighbour and friend, Ben Dupree, in 1914 or early 1915.*



2. *The grave of Mato Kosyk, in the Albion cemetery. Photograph taken in July 1973.*



3. The house built by Mato Kosyk on his farmland. View from the orchard, taken November 1955.



4. The house built by Mato Kosyk on his farmland. View from the rear, taken November 1955.